

Deaf Culture Question of the Week – Jan. 30 – Feb. 3, 2012  
Bill Newell, Principal Washington School for the Deaf

CODA who went on to win an Oscar for Best Actress in 1975 for her role as Nurse Ratched in the movie *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

- a) Glenda Jackson
- b) Louise Fletcher
- c) Carole Kane
- d) Ann-Margret

Answer “b” – Louise Fletcher was the hearing daughter of Estelle Caldwell and the Reverend Robert Capers Fletcher who were both deaf. Louise’s father was an Episcopal priest and founded over 40 churches for the deaf in Alabama. He was a graduate of the Alabama School for the Deaf and Blind. Louise Fletcher although best known for her role as Nurse Ratched in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* had a distinguished career in film and television. During her Academy Award speech she took a moment to use sign language to thank her parents. It was a very touching moment and is an example of the recognition and growing awareness of American Sign Language and Deaf culture that was appearing in the film and television media during the 1970s and 80s. In that period, after the publication of Stokoe’s groundbreaking research into the structure of American Sign Language and his bold claim that the signing of Deaf people was a language, sign language began to appear on television and in film. Louise Fletcher’s use of signing in such an iconic event as the Academy Awards was significant for the recognition of ASL and the growing interest in ASL that was occurring across the United States at that time.

Check out Louise Fletcher’s accomplishments in film and television here:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louise\\_Fletcher](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louise_Fletcher)

See the portion of Louise Fletcher’s Academy Award acceptance speech where she thanks her parents using sign language here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kp3uKNVYJ1M>

Read about Louise Fletcher's parents here:

<http://www.littlereview.com/goddesslouise/articles/nyt0476.htm>

Deaf Culture Questions of the Week are archived at: <http://www.wsd.wa.gov>